

DCI/IC 75-1529

27 June 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Clarke

SUBJECT: ASD(I) Proposal on Data Standards for COINS

1. I agree with the proposed draft of Dr. Hall's letter. My only hesitation is as to whether this puts NPIC in a straightjacket because it requires them to implement a predetermined decision which neither NPIC nor I have studied. Norm Solat assures me on the phone that this is not so -- that the approach will be first to call on all organizations to identify how they now handle standards for COINS files, and then through a matrix look for the most suitable common denominators. Solat says that we are not committing NPIC to do more than come to reason together about the problem and then to be willing to apply reasonable solutions. On this basis, I concur.

2. ASD(I) got this idea from me in the first place. See [ ] letter (attached) which he wrote to me for the record, after we had several discussions in which we agreed, along with [ ] and Norm Solat, that this would be a good way to get moving on a universally unpopular subject.

3. [ ] reference to you about wrapping up this in 90 days is very unrealistic. However, a start can be made, and if ASD(I) is the driver that is what will count.

4. I am concerned that [ ] impatience may drive him to favor a solution that may be good for computers (which require people to turn square corners and go to lengths to organize data) but not very good for intelligence analysts. The effort should be to get away from "codes" (e.g., 3LPD = some plain English noun), because this just requires the analyst to learn those intermediary codes. The wave of the future is to anticipate that computers will be able to recognize plain English words and the building of elaborate tables of gibberish should be avoided. At the same time, this elaborate coding is what the entire U.S. government and the private sector are busily engaged in via national and international standards associations and a government-wide effort spearheaded by the National Bureau of Standards.

5. We have some institutional sorting out to do. DCID 1/15 charges USIB/IHC with promoting standards for the community -- but it is a directive without teeth. The IHC Data Standards Panel is well intended

but gets all too little support from the institutional chains of command involved, and it has not been able to wield the influence that ASD(I) could as a line manager. In order to interrelate DCID 1/15 with this new responsibility by ASD(I), I think in our reply to Dr. Hall the DCI might say that he agrees in principle, and therefore is asking Hall to perform the same role as Executive Agent for developing standards for COINS that he is doing for developing the COINS system. This would not exhaust all of the USIB/IHC responsibility in DCID 1/15, however, because it deals only with the COINS subset. Therefore, we should look forward to some rewriting of DCID 1/15 based on the experience gained in the new ASD(I) effort. And, a DCI representative -- I guess that means me, since I already have the DCI COINS account -- should monitor the new ASD(I) effort.

[Redacted]

Chairman, IHC

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Attachment  
as stated

Distribution:

Orig - addressee  
1 - IC Registry  
1 - IHC Subject (Data Standards)  
1 - IHC Reading File

DCI/IC/IHC [Redacted] (27 June 75)

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13585 Romany Drive  
Pacific Palisades  
California 90272

March 11, 1975

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[redacted]  
Intelligence Community Staff  
7C35  
CIA  
McLean, Virginia

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Dear [redacted]

I appreciated the chance to see you last week and to review the status of data standards in the intelligence community. Evidently little has changed since my last visit. The individual agencies continue to create computer files that are independent of one another, they still resist the idea of having standards imposed from the outside, and they are worried about the cost of file conversion.

To tolerate confused computer file building any longer is to invite chaos for the user in the future. Action must be taken now to install a workable program that contains attractive incentives. I believe a good place to begin is within the context of the community's information network (COINS). Here is what I propose:

1. That the interagency data standards function be assigned to COINS.
2. That COINS collaborate with the individual agencies to devise common data standards for all files - present and future - residing on its interagency network.
3. That each agency accept responsibility for making its COINS' files conform to interagency data standards.
4. That agreement to common data standards be made a prerequisite to joining and using the interagency COINS network.

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There are a number of reasons why the above policy will work:

1. It is manageable. The number of files on COINS is small. Each agency will thus be required to convert selectively, and not en masse.
2. It solves the principal problem. The individual agencies follow internal standards that are uniform. Only when the files of several agencies are processed collectively, such as on COINS, is the user faced with confusing protocols.
3. It facilitates the cross-correlation of data. Agency intelligence files cannot be shared unless the user, sitting at his terminal, can utilize multiple files as if they were one: common standards make this possible.
4. It is cost/effective. The information benefits to be derived by the intelligence analyst are estimated to be greater than the cost of revising COINS' files.
5. It is a long range solution. The trend in the community is toward interagency networking of intelligence information. Consequently, it is wiser to concentrate on improving the network files rather than individual agency files if an investment choice must be made at this time.
6. It can serve as a model. Given time, training, and practice, the common data standards adopted by COINS are certain to seep down and affect the computer programs of the individual agencies.
7. It is consistent with the DCI's interagency authority and responsibilities.

I believe the above course of action to be the one to follow and urge that you consider its adoption. Give me a ring, after you read this letter, if further elaboration is required.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

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INTELLIGENCE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

The Honorable William E. Colby  
Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Bill:

The lack of community data standards remains a major deterrent to effective information exchange between intelligence analysts and inter-agency data bases. Suggested resolutions in the past have become bogged down because of difficulties in achieving agreement between agencies. I believe that a concerted effort against a bounded subset of the problem can achieve much-needed results in a relatively short time, and can act as a springboard toward achieving a full solution to the problem.

The files accessible through COINS represent such a bounded subset. I propose, therefore, to begin our efforts with those files. This approach has been discussed by my staff and the staffs of all involved agencies, as well as with the Information Handling Committee of USIB.

I have asked each COINS file sponsor to provide a representative to a Task Force under the COINS Project Manager, and I invite you to provide a CIA representative. The proposed format for inventorying the required information and a milestone schedule is included as Attachments A and B, respectively. Please have your representative contact the COINS Project Manager, [redacted] by 7 July.

Sincerely,

Albert C. Hall

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

26 Jun 75

Memo For

Attached you will find a copy of the proposed letter from Dr. Hall to Mr. Colby, which Mr. Goulder discussed with you. Would appreciate your coordination.

*Norm Solot*

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26 Jun 75

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*Norm Solot*

DCI/IC 75-2260 25X1

LDX  
-CIA/OPS GEN



INTELLIGENCE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

301/10 75-1260

The Honorable William E. Colby  
Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

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